

# Bess of Hardwick's Letters

**Letter ID: 017 (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=017>)**

From: James Crompe (Chatsworth House, Derbyshire);

To: Bess of Hardwick;

Date: 20 November [1565?]

Summary: James Crompe, a servant, writes to Bess (Lady St. Loe) regarding the education of her sons, the selling of sheep, and some previous letters passed between them.

Archive: Folger Shakespeare Library, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (18)

Delivery status: to Bess, sent

Letter features: papered seal, embossed featuring a heart and cross Ribbon/floss – no. Letter packet - tuck and fold

Hands: James Crompe | archivist |

Version: 1.0

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# Bess *of* Hardwick's Letters

## **People Associated with Letter 017: James Crompe**

James Crompe was perhaps Bess's most trusted servant. He entered her service following her marriage to William Cavendish (in 1547), and later oversaw the building of Chatsworth when she was Lady St. Loe (in the 1560s).

Other letters associated with James Crompe:

8 March [1560?] (Recipient)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=100>)

26 February [1566?] (Author)(URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=18>)

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## People Associated with Letter 017: Bess of Hardwick

Born Elizabeth Hardwick (in c.1521/2, d. 13 February 1608), the woman known to posterity as Bess of Hardwick married four times during her life, as a result of which her name changed from Hardwick to Barlow (or Barley), Cavendish, St Loe and then finally (when she was countess of Shrewsbury and then dowager countess) Talbot. As one of the five children of John Hardwick (1495-1528) of Hardwick, Derbyshire, and his first wife, Elizabeth (née Leake), Bess had three sisters (Mary, Jane and Alice) and one brother (James). The Hardwicks were established Derbyshire gentry who had inherited a modest manor house and c.400 acres in and around Hardwick. But when John died in 1528, and their lands were seized by the crown, Bess faced hardship. Bess's mother quickly remarried but her new husband, Ralph Leche of Chatsworth, Derbyshire, brought little land or money to the marriage, and three more daughters were born (Bess's half-sisters Elizabeth, Jane and Margaret). Little else is known of Bess's childhood but, while still young, she was married for the first time, to Robert Barlow (or Barley) of Barlow, Derbyshire, sometime in or before 1543. Barlow died in 1544 and Bess received a small inheritance. In 1547 she married the twice-widowed Sir William Cavendish, treasurer of the king's chamber. Bess and Cavendish had eight children, six of whom survived: Frances (1548), Henry (1550), William (1551, from whom the dukes of Devonshire are descended), Charles (1553, from whom the dukes of Newcastle and Portland are descended), Elizabeth (1554) and Mary (1556). Probably due to a mixture of affection and shared social ambition, Bess's second marriage was happy and fortuitous. She was now moving in courtly circles and experiencing (for the first time) considerable wealth. In 1549 Cavendish and Bess bought the estate of Chatsworth, which was held jointly in both their names and which he and then Bess, following Cavendish's death in 1557, ambitiously rebuilt. Soon after her second husband's death, and sometime before Elizabeth I's accession (in 1558), Bess married Sir William St Loe, a wealthy widower of ancient noble pedigree. St Loe was captain of the guard to the young queen and in addition to further improving Bess's finances, he also brought her into the queen's inner circle and she served briefly as a gentlewoman of the queen's privy chamber (in 1559). The marriage seems to have not been without affection; however, the two would have spent most of it apart - he serving the queen in London and Bess mostly at Chatsworth. Upon St Loe's death (probably in 1565), Bess inherited most of the estate. In 1567 Bess married for a final time, to George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, one of the richest and most powerful men in England. To consolidate the union of their fortunes, the couple had Bess's eldest son, Henry, marry Shrewsbury's daughter (from his previous marriage), and Shrewsbury's eldest son, Gilbert (later the seventh earl), marry Bess's daughter, Mary. Also around this time, Shrewsbury was appointed to be the keeper of Mary Queen of Scots (from 1568-84). At first, relations between Bess and the Catholic Scottish queen seem to have been amicable; however, relations deteriorated all around as Bess's marriage to Shrewsbury broke down in the 1580s. An infamously nasty and highly public legal battle over estates ensued and finally the courts resolved that Shrewsbury provide Bess with a sizeable income from 1587 onwards (Shrewsbury died in 1590). In 1582, Bess took charge of the upbringing of her orphaned granddaughter, Arbella Stuart (1575-1615), claimant to the English

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and Scottish crowns. In 1587, Bess undertook her remarkable building works at Hardwick: the house now known as Hardwick Old Hall was complete by 1591; next to it, the extraordinary building now known as Hardwick New Hall was complete by 1599 and is one of the greatest architectural ventures of Elizabethan England. It was at Hardwick that Bess spent most of the remainder of her life, much of it devoted to caring for and managing Arbella, who came to loathe her existence in Derbyshire and devised several bizarre plans for her escape (to Bess's great distress). Bess also quarrelled with her eldest son, Henry, and disinherited both him and Arbella in her will. She left most of her estate to her beloved and faithful son, William Cavendish, who continued her great dynasty into the seventeenth century.

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## Other letters associated with Chatsworth House, Derbyshire

- 15 Mar [1550s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=200>)
- 31 Mar [1550s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=198>)
- 13 Apr [c.1550] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=13>)
- 14 Nov [1552] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=99>)
- 13 Jan [c.1560] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=47>)
- 4 Sep [1560?] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=59>)
- 12 Oct [c.1560] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=60>)
- 24 Oct [c.1560] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=61>)
- 18 May 1562 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=55>)
- 8 Dec [c.1565] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=28>)
- 26 Feb [1566?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=18>)
- Jun [1568?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=157>)
- 28 Jun [1568?] (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=64>)
- [1570s?] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=210>)
- [1570] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=178>)
- 28 Jul 1570 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=25>)
- 31 Aug 1570 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=170>)
- 21 Sep 1571 (destination) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=26>)
- [1577] (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=182>)
- 2 Aug 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=197>)
- 23 Sep 1578 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=121>)
- 22 Jun 1579 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=189>)
- 15 Jul 1582 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=175>)
- 8 Apr 1594 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=236>)
- 8 May 1594 (origin) (URL: <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=102>)

## Normalised view of Letter 017

To my synguler good ladye & mestres the ladye elsabeth Seyntloo delyuer thes

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mastur harry with wyllyames shall come vppe so sone as whe can set them furthe he hathe no botes that wyll kepe owte water so that there most be a peyre made for master harrye abowte tewseday he shalbe with yow god wyllinge as tocheing mastur charles mastur wyllyam cavendysche seythe that yf yow set hym to tydsewall all this larning that he nowe hathe shall do hym smalle plesure for the skolemastur that he shulde goo to wyll teche hym after anothur sorte so that he shall for gete thes techenges wyche he hathe had bothe at masters Iackson teyler & wyllyames yf yow do meane to sent master charles to oxford let hym not goo to tydsewall/ master wyllyam cavendysche had of late a letter ffrom teyler from oxford. wherin he dyd wrytte that yf your Ladyshype stode nede of a skolemaste he wyll com to yow to chatteseworth I shall staye charles for going to tydsewall tyll I knowe forthur of your plesure master william candysche wyll se that he shall apleye his boke tyll your plesure be knowon yf master william/ candysche maye be kepte were larning his he wyll be larnyd for he dothe stodye & apleye his boke daye & nyght there nede none to call on hym for going to his boke/ I shall sent yow all the moneye I can gete chortely after Seynt tandrose daye your fatte wethurs are not yet solde it is not tym to syll them as yet your lambes are not solde/ wyne is allwayes dere at london I do perseue/ the pavyer hathe nomore to do here but that pese before the garden dore then he dothe goo the ense to master Sotton he most pave with hym as I here I thought I shulde a Receuyd no letter ffrom your ladyshippe this wyck it was xj of the clocke of weseday or the caryer cam with it to chatteseworth/ so that I had wrytton & sent my letter before yours cam/ I haue sent yow herein closyd lyttones letter wyche cam to me after I Receuyd your letter your geyne of the forest wyll com moche aftur my seyings as yow shall perceue by lyttones letter lytton with others wyll take it of yow as yow maye perceue by his lettur/ take your advysement in that behalf for sure it is the thyng vnmete for you as cryst knowyth who preserue your ladyshippe in helyth ffrom chatteseworth the xxth of november

by your obedyent seruant

Iamys Crompe//

yow had nede to haue sir Rychard here seing that marchaton is not here//

## Diplomatic view of Letter 017

[Address Leaf]

To my syngule<sup>r</sup> good  
ladye & mestres the ladye  
elsabeth Seyntloo delyu<sup>r</sup>  
thes  
§

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[Letter Text]

### [Letter Text: Notes]

X.d.428

(18) [Item number, hand: archivist]

20 [Old foliation/item number, hand: archivist]

mastu<sup>r</sup> harry w<sup>t</sup> wylllyames shall come vppe so sone as whe can  
set them furthe he hathe no botes that wyll kepe owte wate<sup>r</sup>  
so that there most be a peyre made for m<sup>r</sup> harrye abowte tewseday  
he shalbe w<sup>t</sup> yow god wyllinge as tocheing mastur charles mastu<sup>r</sup>  
wylllyam cavendysche seythe that yf yow set hym to tydsewall  
all this larning that he nowe hathe shall do hym smalle plesure  
for the skolemastu<sup>r</sup> that he shulde goo to wyll teche hym afte<sup>r</sup>  
anothu<sup>r</sup> sorte so that he shall for gete thes techenges wyche  
he hathe had bothe at m<sup>r</sup> Iackeson teyle<sup>r</sup> & wylllyames yf yow  
do meane to sent m<sup>r</sup> charles to x oxford let hym not goo to  
tydsewall/ m<sup>r</sup> wylllyam cavendysche had of late a lette<sup>r</sup> ff<sup>om</sup>  
teyle<sup>r</sup> from oxford. wherin he dyd wrytte that yf yo<sup>r</sup> Ladyshype  
stode nede of a skolemast<sup>r</sup> he wyll com to yow to chatteseworth  
I shall staye charles for going to tydsewall tyll I knowe forthu<sup>r</sup>  
of yo<sup>r</sup> plesure m<sup>r</sup> w candysche wyll se that he shall apleye  
his boke tyll yo<sup>r</sup> plesure be knowon yf m<sup>r</sup> w/ candyshe maye  
be kepte were larning his he wyll be larnyd for he dothe stodye  
& apleye his boke daye & nyght there <sup>^nede^</sup> none to call on hym  
for going to his boke/ I shall sent yow all the moneye I

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can gete chortely afte<sup>r</sup> Seynt tandrose daye yo<sup>r</sup> fatte  
wethu<sup>r</sup> s are not yet solde it is not tym to syll them as yet  
yo<sup>r</sup> lambes are not solde/ wyne is allwayes dere at london  
I do *perseue*/ the payve<sup>r</sup> hath nomore to do here but that pese  
before the garden dore then he dothe goo the ense to maste<sup>r</sup>  
Sotton he most pave w<sup>t</sup> hym as I here

[page break]

I thought I shulde a Receuyd no lette<sup>r</sup> ffrom yo<sup>r</sup> ladyshippe  
this wyck it was xj of the clocke of weseday or the  
carye<sup>r</sup> cam w<sup>t</sup> it to chatteseworth/ so that I had wrytton &  
sent my lette<sup>r</sup> before yo<sup>r</sup> s cam/ I haue sent yow herein  
closyd lyttones lette<sup>r</sup> wyche cam to me afte<sup>r</sup> I Receuyd yo<sup>r</sup>  
lette<sup>r</sup> yo<sup>r</sup> geyne of the forest wyll com [*deletion*] moche aftu<sup>r</sup>  
my seyngs as yow shall perceue by lyttones lette<sup>r</sup> lytton w<sup>t</sup>  
othe<sup>r</sup> s wyll take it of yow as yow maye perceue by his  
lettu<sup>r</sup> / take yo<sup>r</sup> advysement in that behalf for sure it is  
the thyng vnmete for you as cryst knowyth who p<sup>r</sup> serue yo<sup>r</sup>  
ladyshippe in helyth ffrom chatteseworth the xx<sup>th</sup> of november

by yo<sup>r</sup> obedyent *seruant*

Iamys Crompe//

yow had nede to haue *sir* Rycharde here seing that marchaton  
is not here//

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